

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L WARSAW 0494

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XH, PL

SUBJECT: RFE BROADCASTING TO POLAND

REF: WARSAW A-372 OF DECEMBER 6, 1974

1. TWO EXCELLENT POLISH-AMERICAN OBSERVERS AND A PROMINENT POLISH POET HAVE TOLD US RECENTLY THAT THEY BELIEVE RFE'S AUDIENCE HAS DECREASED SIGNIFICANTLY IN RECENT YEARS BECAUSE POLISH LISTENER INTEREST HAS CHANGED. ACCORDING TO THESE SOURCES, POLISH LISTENERS TODAY SEEK OBJECTIVE NEWS PRESENTATION AND COMMENTARY AND ARE FAR LESS INTERESTED THAN IN THE PAST IN STRIDENT ATTACKS ON THE COMMUNIST SYSTEM AND THE POLISH LEADERSHIP.

2. THE FIRST SOURCE, AN AMERICAN JOURNALIST OF POLISH EXTRACTION WHO SPEAKS GOOD POLISH, WAS HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1968. HE SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT MAKE ANY SPECIAL EFFORT TO QUERY PEOPLE ON RFE, HE HEARD FAR LESS MENTION OF IT IN HIS CONVERSATIONS THAT WHEN HE LIVED HERE IN 1968. HE OBSERVED THAT RFE'S STRIDENT APPROACH HAD LESS APPEAL TO POLISH LISTENERS TODAY THAN IN A MORE TUMULTUOUS PERIOD SEVEN YEARS AGO. AT THE SAME TIME, HE CAME ACROSS MORE FREQUENT AND FAVORABLE REFERENCES TO THE VOICE OF AMERICA THAN BEFORE.

3. THE SECOND SOURCE, A USG EMPLOYEE OF POLISH BIRTH,
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 WARSAW 00494 250841Z

SAID THAT HE HAD ASKED MANY OF HIS RELATIVES AND FRIENDS FOR

THEIR VIEWS ON RFE. IN CONTRAST TO HIS FIRST POST-WAR VISIT TO POLAND IN 1959, HE FOUND FEW DEVOTED LISTENERS. SEVERAL SAID THEY NOW PREFERRED EITHER BBC OR VOA BECAUSE THEY WERE MORE OBJECTIVE THAN RFE. A COMPLAINT THE SOURCE HEARD MORE THAN ONCE ABOUT RFE WAS THAT IT WAS A PREJUDICED IN ITS NEGATIVE TREATMENT OF PEOPLE'S POLAND AS RADIO WARSAW WAS IN ITS POSITIVE TREATMENT. ALL, HOWEVER, BELIEVED THAT RFE STILL HAD A ROLE TO PLAY AND SHOULD BE CONTINUED, BUT WITH BETTER BALANCED AND MORE OBJECTIVE PROGRAMMING.

4. ONE OF POLAND'S BEST-KNOWN POETS, KNOWN FOR HIS OUT-SPOKENLY ANTI-COMMUNIST VIEWS, TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT RFE IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL AND MUST CONTINUE BUT THAT IT WOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE IF IT DROPPED ITS SARCASTIC COLD-WAR TONE AND SHARP ATTACKS ON THE POLISH PARTY HIERARCHY IN FAVOR OF AN OBJECTIVE PRESENTATION OF NEWS ITEMS ON POLAND AND EASTERN EUROPE NOT PRESENTED HEREAND OF MORE SUBTLE, LESS VITUPERATIVE COMMENTARY ON THE POLISH SCENE. HE ALSO URGED GREATER ATTENTION TO YOUTH-ORIENTED PROGRAMMING.

5. COMMENT: JUDGING BY ITS OUTPUT, THE POLISH SERVICE LACKS A CONCEPT OF MISSION AND A STRATEGY WHICH REFLECT THE CHANGES OF THE PAST TWENTY YEARS IN THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION AND IN POLAND'S DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT. SO LONG AS THIS LACK PERSISTS, THE SERVICE WILL CONTINUE TO LOSE AUDIENCE APPEAL AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE UNABLE TO BUILD A YOUTH AUDIENCE. SUCH A CONCEPT CANNOT BE DEVELOPED BY THE PERSONNEL OF THE SERVICE ITSELF, BUT MUST BE SUPPLIED BY THE AMERICAN LEADERSHIP (OR, FAILING THAT, BY BIB). IF THE POLISH SERVICE IS TO HELP RFE JUSTIFY ITSELF AS WORTHY OF CONTINUED CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT, IT MUST BE GIVEN SUCH A CONCEPT AND MUST IMPLEMENT IT INTELLIGENTLY. THE EMBASSY WOULD BE INTERESTED IN RECEIVING AN INDICATION OF THE REACTION OF BIB AND EUR TO THIS COMMENT. END COMMENT.
DAVIES

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